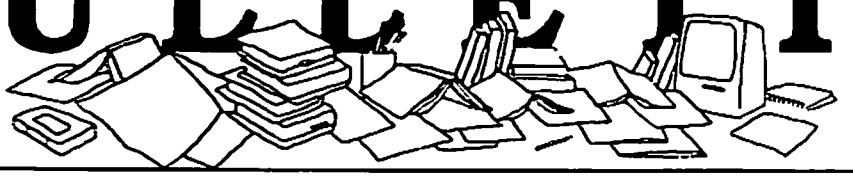
THE LITERACY MATERIALS

BULLETIN



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Spring 2000

• instructors • tutors • learners • administrators • coordinators • resource centres • learning centres •

Here we are beginning a new year; literacy work and the search for good materials goes on. In this issue we have a number of books that consider the geography, history, politics and social issues of Canada: *Our Home and Native Land*: *Canada Geography*, *A Beginning Look at Canada,* and *Canada From Eh to Zed*. We found three resources specifically about Canada. What a richness!

On the other hand, there is a remarkable book called *The Children of China* that looks at China in all its size and variety. For each issue of the *Bulletin*, we find ourselves considering some books specifically written for children. Besides *The Children of China*, we review *Music of the Dolphins,* a book telling of a girl, raised by dolphins, who becomes the subject of scientific study. It seems to me that there are more and more books for children that are not patronizing of children and therefore are also satisfying for adult readers. Do your students react when they see that it is a book for children? Some instructors feel it depends on the book and their presentation of it. Some instructors find they can simply put labels over any words indicating a grade or age level. We encourage you to discuss this question and let us know if you have strong feelings or insights.

This issue has no video and no software reviews. We certainly field-tested some but decided that they weren't good enough to warrant space. Those of us with Internet and CD ROM drives spend a lot of time trying out sites and shareware, but not with much luck. When you add the expense involved with most CD ROM programs, very few are good enough to tell you about. This is an on-going struggle; if any of you have found good software or videos that we should review, we'd appreciate hearing from you. We have three guest reviewers this issue, two of them past committee members. Thank you to Kate Nonesuch, Iris Strong and Jan Sawyer.

We have had changes to the committee and say a reluctant goodbye to Lil McPhail and an eager hello to Rena Neufeld. This issue was proofread by Arleigh Trail and desktopped by Joanna Lord. Our thanks to you both.

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1-800-663-1293

Title:	***Our Home and Native Land: Canada Geography***
Author:	Sonja E. Schild
Publisher:	Smart Toys, 1999
	#210-5550 Beresford St., Burnaby, BC V5J 5G8
	phone (604) 433-1347 fax (604) 433-2498
	email: smarttoys@bbr.ca
ISBN:	0-9684445-0-4
Price:	$24.99 for book
	Binder size map $2.99, Poster size map $18.99
Reviewer:	Kate Nonesuch

Our Home and Native Land : Canada Geography

I loved this book. It helped me teach Canadian geography more easily than ever before and with better results.

The book consists of reproducible outline maps of Canada (about 25 maps) with a page of exercises for each one, plus additional review exercises. The map exercises cover provinces and territories, capital and other cities, and rivers and lakes. So many maps provide lots of review and practice on each topic. Each exercise asks students to repeat what they have done before, with a new twist.

Students in my class liked to do the exercises. We generally did two maps on each of three days a week. Students looked forward to doing them, and if they missed a day would ask me for the work they had missed. I could see that as we went on to other topics, putting in the names of all the provinces and territories became automatic for many students. Students became more familiar with cities, and the distinction between cities and provinces became clear.

The exercises make it relatively easy to deal with different levels of knowledge in the group. For example, some students who were familiar with most of the names were interested in the questions on relative sizes; they were especially interested in the challenge of drawing the boundaries between provinces. Less able students concentrated simply on getting the names in the right places. Doing the map work over many days gave us lots of opportunities to talk about what we knew about Canada, or what was in the news.

Another teacher using the book comments, "The maps are clear, attractive and up-to-date. The print is a good size." A small laminated map in colour (8.5 x 11 inches) and a large wall map are also available. The book was meant for the K-12 system and asks students to do a lot of colouring; I made the colouring optional and didn't get any negative feedback about it, nor about the name Smart Toys or the bear logo, both of which we had some reservations about.

From *Our Home and Native Land: Canada Geography* by Sonja E. Schild. Reproduced by permission of Smart Toys. This page is reduced to 85% of its original size.

Sample Page

Name: _____ Date: _____

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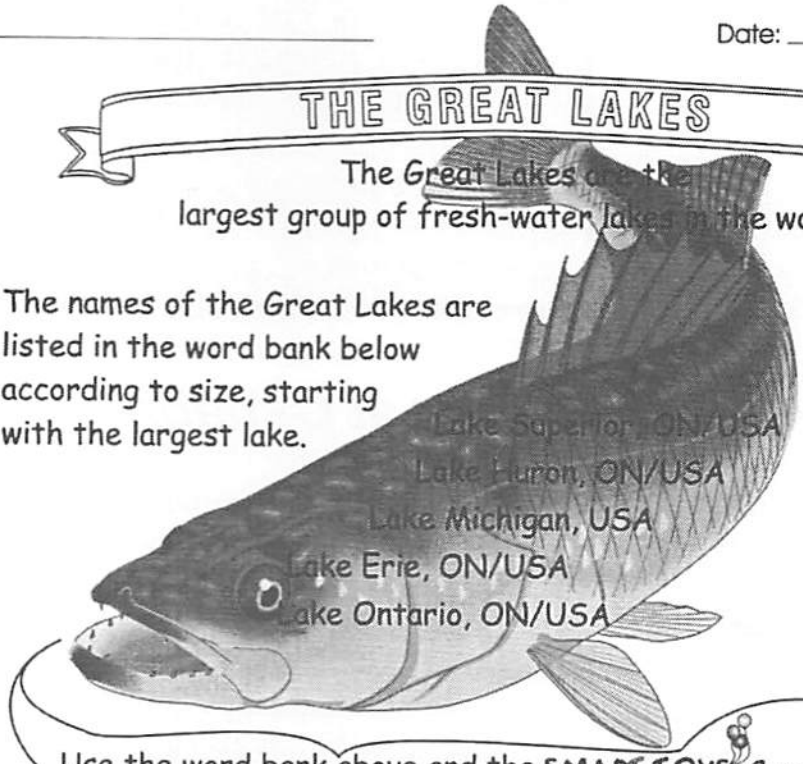
THE GREAT LAKES

The Great Lakes are the largest group of fresh-water lakes in the world.

The names of the Great Lakes are listed in the word bank below according to size, starting with the largest lake.



Use the word bank above and the SMART TOYS Canada Map and mark the following on Map #14:

1. Trace the border between Canada and the USA in red.
2. Colour Ontario red and Quebec purple.
3. Label the lakes and colour them blue. Underline the largest of the Great Lakes in red.
4. List the lakes from west to east. **Memory jogger:** Superman helps everyone.

_____

_____

5. Mark the location of Ontario's provincial capital. Use the correct city symbol.
   It is ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ on Lake ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ in the Province of ☐☐.
6. Trace the river connecting Lake Erie and Lake Ontario in blue.
   It is ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ River.
7. Mark the location of Niagara Falls with a red X and write the name beside it.
8. Manitoulin Island is the world's largest island in a lake.
   It is located in Lake ☐☐☐☐☐. Colour it green.
9. The most southern point of Canada is ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Island. Colour it green.
   It is in Lake ☐☐☐☐.

BRAIN WORK The fish pictured above lives in the Great Lakes. Its name is ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐.

1. In which province are four of the Great Lakes located? _____
2. Which one of the Great Lakes is **not** in Canada? _____
3. In which country is this lake located? _____
4. Which river links the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean? _____

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Title: *A Beginning Look at Canada*
Author: Anne-Marie Kaskens
Publisher: Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1998
1870 Birchmount Rd., Scarborough, ON M1P 2J7
phone 1-800-567-3800 fax 1-800-263-7733
email: phabinfo_pubcanada@prenhall.com
ISBN: 0-13-760117-4
Price: $28.70
Reviewer: Jan Weiten

A Beginning Look at Canada

Students like *A Beginning Look at Canada* because it has content that interests them and is written at a level that most can easily access. They also enjoy the variety of exercises that reinforces material presented.

This book includes sections on Canada's geography, history, people and government. Within each section are a number of short readings about basic facts and concepts concerning the topic. Each reading is followed by comprehension questions and exercises designed to develop reading skills.

A number of key features make the text appealing. Perhaps, most importantly, students feel that this information about Canada is important to their lives. As one student said, "This is the kind of thing I need to know more about." Another said, "We really need this!" Another aspect that students like is that the individual readings are brief. The information presented becomes easier to digest for many of our learners when it is presented in small doses. One student commented, "I like the little points. It's not long and boring."

Another positive point is that the text presents opportunities to help students develop a variety of reading skills such as reading charts. There are also exercises in which students make charts to show information. Map-reading skills can also be an important focus when using this book because there are a generous number of maps. There is also a wide variety of comprehension exercises.

A Beginning Look at Canada has a large number of photographs, charts and maps to break up the text and uses white space adequately. A glossary for introduced vocabulary follows each section of the book. There is also a Teacher's Manual and Resource Package, which includes pre-reading suggestions, photocopiable masters for making flashcards and an answer key, that I have not reviewed.

A couple of warnings: the book suffers from a lack of colour. It is black and white and grey from beginning to end. Also, although Nunavut is mentioned as becoming a new territory in the future, it is not included on the map of Canada. However, even with these two negative points, I find the book a useful addition to our resources.

From *A Beginning Look at Canada* by Anne-Marie Kaskens. Reproduced by permission of Pearson Education Canada. This page is reduced to 95% of its original size.

Sample Page

Read

Who Can Vote in an Election?

You can vote if you are an **adult** and a **Canadian citizen.** An adult means you are eighteen years or older.

A Canadian citizen means
- you were born in Canada

or

- you became a Canadian citizen

How Do We Vote?

Before voting day, someone visits each home. This person is called an **enumerator.** The enumerator makes a list of all the people who can vote. This list is called the **voters' list.**

If you can vote, the enumerator puts your name on the voters' list. Then you receive a card in the mail. It tells you where to vote on voting day. On voting day you go to the address written on your card.

There you get a **ballot.** A ballot is a piece of paper with the names of candidates on it. You vote in private. You put a mark beside the name of the candidate you like.

Then you put your ballot in the ballot box. At the end of voting day, all the votes are counted. The candidate with the most votes gets **elected.**

Title:	***Canada From Eh to Zed***	
	Things, People, Places and Events.	
Authors:	John Sivell & Deborah Yeager-Shaw	
Publisher:	Full Blast Productions, 1995	
Available:	(see back cover)	
ISBN:	Book One (Things)	$39.95 1-895451-12-4
	Book Two (Places)	$39.95 1-895451-13-2
	Book Three (People)	$39.95 1-895451-14-0
	Book Four (Events)	$39.95 1-895451-15-9
Reviewer:	Nancy Ross	

Canada From Eh to Zed

Canada From Eh to Zed consists of four books each with 26 short, self-contained articles, and each starting with a different letter of the alphabet. For example, "Algonquin Park" begins Book One's *Things* and ends with "Zippers and Other Inventions", "Lake Louise" is in the middle of Book Two's *Places*, and "Zones of Standard Time" ends Book Four's *Events*. Each article is nearly two pages long, completely Canadian, and begins with a simple illustration. It is followed by three pages of questions and activities, ranging from vocabulary and short-answer comprehension questions to discussion questions and, usually, a word puzzle. These books are designed for pulling apart and reproducing and include the answer keys.

The flexibility of the books' design is a real advantage. Some instructors use one article that would work with a current unit; thus, they would copy that article and use it with the whole class. In my class, I made a single copy of each selection and let students choose the topics of interest to them.

They liked the wide range of topics and enjoyed learning about Canadian subjects. For example, many people chose to read about the Dionne quintuplets, hockey figures and famous Canadian rock stars. Of the four books, the *People* book seemed to be the most popular, but students found appealing articles from all four categories. The illustrations are a bit elementary in appearance; however, they do provide the reader with helpful contextual clues.

I found these books appropriate for student discussion; students summarised the article they had read, and then the entire class became involved in every topic chosen. In this way, the lively journalistic style of the articles was recognized, and even struggling readers found them rewarding and meaningful. What I liked best about *Canada From Eh to Zed* is that the content was Canadian and that it was relevant. This kind of contextualized learning allowed the comprehension and word work to be integrated into a more meaningful whole that the students greatly enjoyed.

From *Canada From Eh to Zed - Book Three: People* by John Sivell and Deborah Yeager-Shaw.
Reproduced by permission of Full Blast Productions. This page is reduced to 90% of its original size.

Sample Page

G: Chief Dan George

1 Dan George (1899-1981), Chief of the Shuswap and Squamish tribes in British Columbia, was the seventh generation of his family to hold that hereditary post. He was also the first to lose his position as the result of an election. But for Dan George, this change was simply one more part in an ongoing process. And in his view the process was mainly good.

2 Dan George's real name was Tes-wah-no, Dan Slaholt in English. But at the mission school his teacher could pronounce neither of these names; he called the boy Dan George, a name that stayed with him the rest of his days. Perhaps this accident was an early sign of how fate would treat the Chief for, on several other occasions, unexpected events would continue to influence his life.

3 His first job was as a logger. However, the trees slowly ran out and Dan George--like many others--was forced to change his occupation. Work was available on the waterfront. For some time he loaded and unloaded ships in Vancouver harbour. Then disaster struck again. He was injured by a heavy load that fell from a boat; his lifting days were over. After that, his only hope was to find reasonably light work on construction sites.

4 However, by then one of Dan George's sons was employed on the set of a CBC television series. The role of Antoine, an elderly Indian, was on

Title: ***Portraits of Our Lives*** - Set of 10 booklets
Publisher: The Roeher Institute, 1998
Kinsmen Building, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3
phone (416) 661-9611 fax (416) 661-5701
email: info@roeher.ca
ISBN: 1-896989-19-5
Price: $133 for a set of 10 books
Reviewer: Nancy Ross

Portraits of Our Lives

These small and easy-to-read books were put together by a number of writers, editors, photographers, and illustrators. These readers are based on interviews with Canadian individuals who live with a range of disabilities. Their purpose? To recognize that literacy is not only about reading and writing, but also about equality, rights, justice and inclusion in society.

Each reader is clearly written in large print and is about a person who has made choices about his or her disability. It also discusses how he or she has become involved in broader issues for social justice and human rights. In addition to the easy-to-read text, every page is accompanied by a drawing or photograph, which helps readers get a sense of the person and the issues he or she copes with. A good example is Marie, who discusses her struggles as a young deaf, black woman; or Scott, who has cerebral palsy and is gay.

I found that my students appreciated these books and liked their easy readability. Even struggling readers enjoyed them. Most importantly, they identified with the situations of the people they read about. "Did I ever!" exclaimed one student. These readers are wonderful, not only because they increase our understanding of those with disabilities, but also because most can readily relate the situations they read about in these books to their own lives.

The titles in this series are:
Belonging; Choosing to Be Proud;
Daring to Win; Server of People;
Do You Have a Broken Leg?;
Growing Up, Getting Together;
How We See the World;
It Never Occurred to Me...;
So Much Depends on an Address;
It's About Solidarity.

At school, Ann-Marie and her friends took a **political** stand about flirting.

She says:

"The counsellors tell us that we're not allowed to kiss or **flirt**. But this is normal for teenagers.

So we decided to tell them how we feel about this. We did it together because it was too scary for anyone to do it alone."

From *Portraits of Our Lives: Growing Up, Getting Together.* Reproduced by permission of The Roeher Institute.

Sample Page

Title:	*Parenting With a Heart*
Author:	Desirée Chaker
Publisher:	RECLAIM, 1995
	The Reading Council for Literacy Advance in Montreal,
	3449 University St., Montreal, QC H3A 2A8
	phone (514) 369-7835 fax (514) 369-7837
ISBN:	1-895940-71-0
Price:	$6.70
Reviewer:	Evelyn Battell

Parenting With a Heart

Parenting With a Heart was written by Desirée Chaker, who is a Certified Family Life Educator and a facilitator with the Caring Parent Program. The aim of this simply written book is to "build up a healthy communication between parent and child".

There are several simple and positive lessons in this book. Ms. Chaker's suggested strategy of "Asking instead of telling" was well received by a student at Heiltsuk College. Questions like "Would you like to set the table before or after Sesame Street?" or "Would you like to feed the dog or take him out for a walk?" are excellent alternatives.

Vernon and Sampson, both parents from Duncan, found things they liked in the book, too. Vernon agreed with the idea of giving kids an allowance; Sampson said, "It gave me some pointers, like always let the child know that you're listening."

All these students and others in Cranbrook found the book easy to read and useful for starting a consideration of some parenting tactics. None of the students agreed with everything in the book, and the student from Heiltsuk College found the pages full of "don't" a problem. She feels it doesn't provide many suggestions or alternatives for the no-no's. A group of parents at Douglas College felt, on the basis of their personal experiences, that "time out" doesn't work. On the other hand, they too felt that they had learned a lot from the book.

This is a short book (28 pages) with four black and white line drawings. The chapters include "What is a Parent?", "What is Communication?" (verbal and non-verbal communication), "What is Discipline?" and "What is Structure?" (respect, rules and routine). Desirée Chaker touches on a lot of topics in these pages! She says that being a parent is the hardest job she has ever had. Many of our students will agree with that!

From *Parenting With a Heart* by Desirée Chaker. Reproduced by permission of The Reading Council for Literacy Advance in Montreal.

Sample Page

Verbal Communication

The key to good verbal communication is to express your feelings. It is best to use the word "I." A good example is: "I don't like the way you are behaving." Do not say: "You're acting like an animal."

Never repeat the messages twice. Give the child a chance to respond. A minute of silence is good. It means he or she is thinking.

Don't compare your child to another child. Tell your child how you feel about what he or she is doing. Tell your child how it affects you. This tells the child how you feel. Use an even tone of voice.

Here are some examples of what **not to do.**

Don't order or command by saying things like: "You must..." "You have to..." "You will..."

Title:	***The Children of China: An Artist's Journey***
Author:	Song Nan Zhang
Publisher:	Tundra Books, McClelland & Stewart Young Readers, 1995 481 University Avenue, Toronto, ON M5G 2E9 phone (416) 598-4786 fax (416) 598-0247 website: www.tundrabooks.com
Available:	Your local bookstore
ISBN:	0-88776-448-7
Price:	$19.95
Reviewer:	Ruth Chambers

The Children of China: An Artist's Journey

Taken from *The Children of China: An Artist's Journey* © 1995 Song Nan Zhang published by Tundra Books.

The Children of China: An Artist's Journey traces author and artist Song Nan Zhang's travels in his homeland of China. Crossing a vast country, Zhang writes about and paints pictures showing the diverse peoples of his ancestral land. From Mongolia to the Silk Road, Tibet to Sichuan, Zhang deals with not only the present but also the history of this colourful land. One or more of Zhang's paintings accompany each page of text, thus giving students visual clues to the content. The author's paintings are vibrant and colourful, exemplifying Chinese minorities at work and at play.

This 32-page book is upbeat; it looks at the positive aspects of China, making the book a pleasure to read. For example, Zhang writes about the Tajiks of southern China, saying they "taught [him] a lesson in how it is possible to be happy without wealth, to spread cheer through music and dancing, even though the work is hard and the climate difficult."

The book touches on China's politics, religion and economics, providing readers with sufficient information without being overwhelming. Zhang mentions briefly the Cultural Revolution of 1966 – 1976, and the hardships the Chinese lived through during that political upheaval. He also refers to the religious practices of different peoples, such as the Buddhists of Tibet and the Muslims of Tash Qurghan. The author writes about the Silk Road, where shops and open markets have been around since the time of Marco Polo.

Although the focus of this publication is the children of China, it is by no means a book for children only. The information Zhang provides makes this work a valuable resource for all age groups, including adults. The vocabulary the writer uses is at an advanced level, but the book's many illustrations help students to understand the context even when they don't always understand the text. Student reviewers state that they are able to "work their way through the text with the help of the pictures." Students also enjoy the fact that each page and accompanying picture represents a different area of China, thus making the book a compilation of separate stories.

Overall, *The Children of China* is a valuable book presenting China in a manner that is easily understandable for fundamental literacy students.

Taken from *The Children of China: An Artist's Journey* © 1995 Song Nan Zhang published by Tundra Books.

Sample Page

The mountain world of the Yi

The first question I am asked by anyone looking at this painting is: "Do these people really dress like that when they're working?" The answer is: "Yes, they do."

This Yi mother in Guizhou province is gathering leaves with her two children. The Yi people live mostly in the mountains — after all, they say, Isn't that where the sun and moon live? They use leaves as fuel for their kitchen fires. The children make a little money collecting and selling the leaves. Like children everywhere, they also have fun playing in them.

I had mixed feelings as I painted this picture for I have my own memories of working in the autumn woods. During the Cultural Revolution, when I was sent to the countryside to be "reeducated," we collected leaves to use as food. In the early 1960s, when famine killed millions of people in China, even leaves became hard to find.

Editor's Note: Due to copyright limitations, we are unable to print the rest of the page or the accompanying picture.

Title:	***When the Rains Came and Other Legends of the Salish People***
As told to:	Dolby Bevan Turner
Publisher:	Orca Book Publishers, 1992 PO Box 5626, Station B, Victoria, BC V8R 6S4 phone (250) 380-1229 1-800-210-5277 fax (250) 380-1892 email: orca@orcabook.com
ISBN:	0-920501-87-7
Price:	$12.95
Reviewer:	Evelyn Battell

When the Rains Came and Other Legends of the Salish People

When the Rains Came is a book of five legends of the Salish people as told to the author by various Salish elders. Each legend is introduced by telling how and where the author was the recipient of the legend. It is very clear that this author received permission to retell these stories as a result of a lifelong friendship with the elders of the area. Furthermore, local Cowichan elders report that they are delighted this book is in print.

The respectful and warm tone of these two-page introductions makes the scene come alive, and you feel that you, too, are with the elder who is telling the story. But the language level, as well as the italic print, makes these introductions harder reading than the legends themselves.

As you can see from the sample page, the layout and language level of the legends is appropriate for many literacy students. This particular legend is a version of the flood story and leads to interesting comparisons with the version in the bible or any other version the students may know.

Many students enjoyed the book. A student from Vancouver says, "I like this story. For me it is easy to understand the story's meaning." Students in the Cowichan Valley particularly enjoyed the stories because they knew the tellers and the places. Often, they also had heard the stories. (This was a disadvantage to some students in other places who were not familiar with the Cowichan area.) On the other hand, First Nations students in many programs felt that it was good to learn more about the legends of the First people. One class spent some time reading the story with different students taking different parts. This was quite a challenge, but when they heard themselves on tape, they were very pleased.

The illustrations throughout the book, one for each legend, are by a well-known Cowichan artist, Delmar Johnnie Seletzé. There are also old, and often faded, photographs of the places and people in the book. In all, the layout is pleasing and not too dense. I highly recommend this book.

From *When the Rains Came and Other Legends of the Salish People* as told to Dolby Bevan Turner
Reproduced by permission of Orca Book Publishers. This page is reduced to 90% of its original size.

Sample Page

When the Rains Came

as told by Rosalie Seletze'

Back in the time when the people here saw the rains begin to pour down as they never had before, they said to each other, "It is good that we have all the salmon smoked and dried and safely stowed away."

And an old woman added, "It is good that the young girls gathered so many salmonberries and had time to crush and dry them into cakes before the rains began."

Another said, "Don't forget the women who took their digging sticks and brought us such a harvest of camas roots."

"We have no need to worry," a young brave said. "We have had rains before. It will stop soon—why are my people afraid?"

The chief rose to his feet, spread his arms wide, commanding silence, and addressed the gathering seated in the longhouse. Turning to the youth, he began to speak. "You, young man, are more foolish than brave. The rain has been falling week after week. The water has risen so high that all the houses will soon be flooded. We have to be sure our children are safe." He paused, and then continued, "I ask all the men who are able-bodied to go up into the hills and cut down cedar trees. Cut enough

Title:	***Very Easy True Stories: A Picture-Based First Reader***
Author:	Sandra Heyer
Publisher:	Addison Wesley Longman, 1998
	26 Prince Andrew Place, Don Mills, ON M3C 2H4
	phone 1-800-263-9965 or fax (416) 443-0948
	toll free fax (orders only) 1-800-465-0536
ISBN:	0-291-34313-4
Price:	$35
Reviewer:	Jan Weiten

Very Easy True Stories

The 14 selections in this workbook are intended for ESL students and students with beginning level literacy skills. Each selection consists of three parts: pre-reading to identify basic vocabulary found in the story, two picture-based formats for reading the story and a series of comprehension exercises. The pre-reading activity uses a cartoon to encourage some pre-reading discussion and develop a basic vocabulary list.

The actual story is presented in a cartoon-strip format with captions that match exactly with the paragraphs found on the next page. These paragraphs are also presented with a photograph taken from the newspaper or magazine where the story originated. This picture lends credibility to the claim that these are true stories, however improbable or unlikely the plot lines may seem. There is also a section at the back of the book that gives some more interesting details and background for these stories.

The comprehension exercises are designed to provide repetition of the vocabulary while encouraging the students to think about what they have read and to consider how the story might compare to their own experience.

This book has been very well received in our classrooms. For those students who need this beginning level of reading practice, *Very Easy True Stories* is a welcome resource. It is ideally suited to a one-to-one situation where the student is able to read the selections out loud and there is time for discussion before and after the reading. The students who have used this book have enjoyed it very much and certainly recommend it for other adult learners. Their favourite story seems to be one about a pet penguin in Japan that has been trained to go to the fish market each week and bring back the fish for his family in a back-pack. To quote one student, "This book holds my interest, and it's fun to read because the endings are surprising a lot of the time."

From *Very Easy True Stories: A Picture-based First Reader* by Sandra Heyer. Reproduced by permission of Addison Wesley Longman, Inc. This page is reduced to 90% of its original size.

Sample Page

2. READING

- Listen to your teacher read the story. Look at the pictures.
- Listen to your teacher read the story again. Look at the words. Read the story.

Bob likes to eat spaghetti.

Every Friday he goes to an Italian restaurant and eats spaghetti for lunch.

Phyllis is a waitress at the Italian restaurant.

Phyllis and Bob always talk and laugh. They are good friends.

After Bob eats, he pays for his lunch.

Then he puts some money on the table. The money is for Phyllis. It is her tip.

One day Bob eats spaghetti at the restaurant.

He pays for his lunch.

Then he asks Phyllis, "Do you want a tip today? Or do you want half of my lottery ticket?'

Title:	***Beginning Reasoning & Reading***
Author:	Joanne Carlisle
Publisher:	Educators Publishing Service, Inc., 1999 31 Smith Place, Cambridge, MA, USA 02138-1089 phone 1-800-435-7728 fax (617) 547-0412
Available:	Educators Publishing Service or Artel
ISBN:	0-8388-3001-3
Price:	$16.75
Reviewer:	Iris Strong

Beginning Reasoning & Reading

Beginning Reasoning & Reading is a comprehensive workbook with four units: Word Meaning, Sentence Meaning, Paragraph Meaning and Reasoning Skills. It's glossy cover with a green and gold star design is attractive to adults, and the 140 pages of exercises are well laid out with good fonts and lots of white space.

The Word Meaning unit covers topics like parts and wholes, classifying, same or different, opposites, word relationships, categories, analogies, definitions and following directions. The activities, while not necessary for every student, are clearly explained, stress thinking, and are fun to do.

The unit on Sentence Meaning focuses on how to make a sentence and get the point of the sentence. Among other things, activities include working with jumbled sentences, time order, cause and effect, key words, comparison and following directions.

Unit three, Paragraph Meaning, is the one most widely used by field-testers. As well as the usual "topic sentence, body and concluding sentence" aspects of paragraph writing, it gives exercises on unity, main idea, signal words, time order, steps in a process, cause and effect, comparisons and examples. There is opportunity to practice these aspects of paragraph writing and opportunity to analyze some sample paragraphs as well. This unit is an improvement over the previous publication, *Beginning Paragraph Meaning,* also by Joanne Carlisle. Some students found the directions confusing in the earlier workbook, but this has been addressed by changing the layout slightly and increasing the amount of white space between directions and exercises. Also, directions are now in bold print and labeled as directions – a definite plus!

The final unit, Reasoning Skills, offers practice in deciding between fact and opinion, judging opinions, making decisions and deciding whether or not there is enough information. It also gives opportunity to decide whether information is relevant, making and judging inferences, making comparisons, using syllogisms and drawing conclusions. I think all literacy instructors would agree that these are worthwhile topics!

I recommend this workbook – or specifically chosen portions of it – for students at the functional level either in the classroom or in the tutored setting.

From *Beginning Reasoning & Reading* by Joanne Carlisle. Reproduced by permission of Educators Publishing Service, Inc. This page is reduced to 95% of its original size.

Sample Page

Fact and Opinion

An opinion is an idea that a person or group of people believes. It is not like a fact. It cannot be shown to be true. Here are some opinions:

Cats make good pets.

Sausage can ruin a good pizza.

Lemonade tastes better than orange juice.

Some people believe that cats make good pets. Others don't. They don't like cats, and they don't think cats are good companions. There is no way to prove either of these beliefs to be true. That is why the first statement is an opinion. In the same way, some people like sausage on pizza, and others don't; some people like lemonade better than orange juice, and others don't.

Directions: Label each fact *F* and each opinion *O*.

____ 1. Daisies are the prettiest flowers.

____ 2. Hawks eat mice and rabbits.

____ 3. Soccer is a more exciting sport than football.

____ 4. There should be more cartoons on television.

____ 5. The water in the ocean is salty.

____ 6. Learning to read is easy.

____ 7. Zebras are black and white.

____ 8. The earth is round.

____ 9. Boots are more comfortable than sandals.

____ 10. The sun warms the earth's surface.

Title:	***For Your Information: Reading Skills Book 1***
	For Your Information: Reading Skills Book 2
Author:	Karen Blanchard & Christine Root
Publisher:	Addison-Wesley Longman Publishing Company, Inc., 1996
Available:	Addison-Wesley Longman (see back cover)
ISBN:	Book 1: 0-201-83409-x
	Book 2: 0-201-82538-4
Price:	$34.95 each
Reviewer:	Jan Sawyer

For Your Information

If you are looking for reading material that is thematic, interesting and adult-oriented with a variety of activities, the series *For Your Information* would be a good choice. Although there are three books in this series, numbers one and two are the most appropriate for the fundamental level.

All three books are arranged in a similar manner. Each book is divided into eight theme units that have three or four different readings. These selections provide a varied perspective on the particular topic. Pre-reading activities introduce each reading selection. They support the reading process, encouraging readers to become actively engaged in their reading through dialogue. All readings are followed by a wide range of activities including root/ prefix work, crossword puzzles, vocabulary development exercises and discussion questions. Each unit also provides numerous opportunities for writing. Finally, an answer key is supplied at the end of each book.

My class enjoyed "Attitudes About Animals," Unit 2 in the first book. Although they found some of the reading material challenging, they wanted to work with the material because they found the content of the articles topical and informative. These articles ranged in length from 1 to 1 1/2 pages with adequate white space. While "Can Animals Think?" led to a lively class discussion, "Crazy About Cats or Just Crazy?" provided an opportunity for students to write stories about their animals.

All the instructors who reviewed the material liked many of the readings and the range of activities. However, there were some concerns. Because the books were written for the adult ESL learner, some of the questions and activities would have to be adapted or ignored in the non-ESL classroom. It was also noted that many of the questions were American oriented.

This series provides a wide assortment of articles and encourages active involvement of the reader. The activities promote reading, discussing, listening and thinking. This combination of readings and activities would be an asset to any fundamental classroom.

From *For Your Information* by Karen Blanchard. Reproduced by permission of Addison Wesley Longman Publishing Company, Inc. This page is reduced to 95% of its original size.

Sample Page

How Good Is Your Memory? is an interview with a teacher and psychotherapist, Diane Englund. Through her work, Ms. Englund has learned that different people gather and remember information in different ways. This observation has led her to an interest in how the brain processes and remembers information.

BEFORE YOU READ

PREREADING ACTIVITY

Before you read the following interview about memory, think about the types of things that are easy or difficult for you to remember. Put *E* next to the items below that are easy for you to remember. Put *D* next to the ones that are difficult for you to remember.

_____ names
_____ words to songs
_____ math formulas
_____ faces
_____ phone numbers
_____ addresses
_____ speeches
_____ sports statistics
_____ directions
_____ birthdays
_____ historical facts

How Good Is Your Memory?

What aspects of brain biology interest you?

I have become very interested in the importance of memory in our lives. Most people know that the brain controls how the body works. The brain also controls what the mind thinks, how we feel, how we process information, and how we perceive things. I am interested in how people remember, what they remember, and how they use and improve their memories.

Title:	***The Music of the Dolphins***
Author:	Karen Hesse
Publisher:	Scholastic Canada Ltd., 1996, 175 Hillmount Road, Markham, ON L6C 1Z7 phone (905) 887-7323 or toll free 1-800-268-3848 fax (905) 887-1131 or toll free 1-800-387-4944
Available:	Your local bookstore
ISBN:	0-590-89798-5
Price:	$5.50
Reviewer:	Joyce Cameron

The Music of the Dolphins

The Music of the Dolphins is a story about an infant who was raised to adolescence by dolphins and then captured by humans who kept her as an object of research until she finally won her return to the ocean.

This book is wonderfully suited to working with a group with a wide range of reading skills. The decoding is simple, but the ideas are complex and engaging for readers of all levels. In my class, students chose to read it out loud, a page each turn. Most of the students were very enthusiastic about it, and everyone opted to continue to the end of the book. One student who read the book on her own said that the story was "heart touching" with so many "descriptive words that it made [her] heart shrink with sympathy."

Reviewers agree that the book lends itself to thought-provoking discussions on a number of issues: how scientists view uniqueness in society; what represents home; the power of adults over children; the power of government over individuals; and the relationship between humans and animals, etc. This book lends itself to discussion and writing.

The author has used different sizes of print (ranging from 50 to 165 words per page) and different levels of sentence complexity to represent different stages in the life of the main character. Students became able to use the print size and fonts to complement the story line in the text. One instructor thought that the plot would be simple for students to understand. However, my students found the story line quite challenging because of the use of flashbacks. The scenes in the present were not always clear until after the flashbacks provided more context.

The book has no illustrations, but the print size and font variations helped to make it visually interesting.

We recommend *The Music of the Dolphins* for individual and classroom use.

The Bulletin's Board

A History of the Ojibwe People: Ojibwe Culture and Literacy Exercise Workbook

(ISBN 1-896832-09-1)

This is another product of the United Native Friendship Centre Literacy Program in Owen Sound, Ontario. In *Bulletin 20* we reviewed *Ten Legends Workbook: Ojibwa and Iroquois Legends.* This book has many of the same lovely characteristics: beautiful art, strong clear page design, and interesting factual material about the clothing, food, transportation, and lifestyle of modern historical people in the Rainy River district.

Vancouver Stories: People in its History and *Vancouver Stories: Places in its History*

These books, reviewed in *Bulletin 19*, are available at Vancouver Community College. The publishers tell me that there are still many free copies; contact the Basic Education Department at (604) 871-7369.

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